

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Nile Virus Remains a Public Health Threat

Wyoming residents should use common sense measures to avoid mosquito bites because West Nile virus is still a potential public health threat in most areas of the state, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

West Nile virus (WNV) can cause serious illness in some cases. Mosquitoes spread WNV by feeding on infected birds and then biting people, other birds and animals.

“There are many factors affecting the possible numbers of West Nile virus cases we could see in any year,” said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “No one can easily or consistently predict what may happen with West Nile virus from year to year. That’s why we want people to protect themselves.”

“One thing we do know is the presence of still, stagnant water or irrigation can be an important factor,” Murphy said. “The flooding we’ve seen in areas around the state should serve as a reminder to be careful of WNV because flooding can obviously lead to more water sitting around.”

No human WNV cases have been yet reported in Wyoming this year, but there have been two positive mosquito pools found in Goshen County.

Murphy recommends the following common sense measures for WNV protection:

- 1) DAWN and 2) DUSK - Most mosquito species prefer to feed at dawn or dusk, so avoid spending time outside during these times.
- 3) DRESS - Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light-colored and made of tightly woven materials to keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- 4) DRAIN - Mosquitos breed in shallow, stagnant water. Reduce the amount of standing water by draining and/or removing it.
- 5) DEET - Use an insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide). When using DEET, be sure to read and follow the label instructions. Other repellents such as Picaridin (KBR 3023) or oil of lemon eucalyptus can also be effective.

Last year in Wyoming there were 12 human WNV cases with 1 death reported. There were 10 human cases with no deaths in 2008; 185 human cases with 2 deaths in 2007; 65 human cases with 2 deaths in 2006; 12 human cases with 2 deaths in 2005; 10 human cases with no deaths in 2004; and 393 human cases with 9 deaths in 2003.